Original Research Article

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Perception of Indian physiotherapists about awards: a survey

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ABSTRACT

Background: World has become more awards centric probably because of the desire to recognize achievement is an integral part of being human. Awards and trophies are big business in 21st century and they are given to people of all ages by all kind of organizations. Physiotherapy profession has a long history of awards all over the globe but the current status of physiotherapy awards in India is hardly studied, documented or published in recent times and hence to get an insight of the same this survey research was done by inviting physiotherapy professionals with varying work experience, professional qualifications and achievements across the country.

Methods: A qualitative research approach was used to conduct an online survey of physiotherapists in India. A brief questionnaire with basic information and strategic questions about awards and perception of physiotherapists were used for this purpose.

Results: Informants reported that there hardly any award given by government to recognize the contribution of physiotherapists to the society. Most of they believed that it's because of lack of political will and absence of central regulatory authority or council for physiotherapy profession in India. Most of them were happy about the award given by nongovernmental organizations but were not satisfied with its credibility, transparency in the process and selection of winners and felt mostly it's a biased practice.

Conclusions: There is need for some sort of awards and recognition of physiotherapists' contribution to health care and the society by government and the process of selection for some nongovernmental awards need to be more transparent and unbiased.

Keywords: Award, Physiotherapy, Perception, Survey, India

INTRODUCTION

Our world has become more awards centric probably because of the desire to recognize achievement is an integral part of being human. Awards and trophies are big business in 21st century and they are given to people of all ages by all kind of organizations. They make a clear statement about achievement like this is the winner, this is the best and this is what works. Glittering trophies and shining awards are popular because we live in a material world. Maybe, our fascination with these symbols of achievement goes beyond our enthusiasm with all that glitters. After all, can any of us even think of a time in life when there weren't *t*rophies? If your answer is yes,

we're calling your bluff. That's because none of us were alive when awards were first put into use.¹

Historically, the word trophy, coined in English in 1550, was derived from the French trophée in which means a prize of war. From ancient times, trophies often took the form of magnificent statues, columns, arches, two handled cups, cups without handle and medals.² It is believed to be a tangible, durable reminder of a specific achievement, and serves as recognition or evidence of merit. An award is something given to a person, a group of people, like a team, or an organization in recognition of their excellence in certain field. An award may be accompanied by trophy, title, certificate, commemorative

plaque, medal, badge, pin or ribbon. An award may carry a monetary prize given to the recipient. It is believed that awards do not only acknowledge success; they recognize many other qualities: ability, struggle, effort and above all excellence.³

Globally, physiotherapy has become an integral part of health care due to its crucial role in keeping population well, mobile and independent. So all over the world awards and honours are given to physiotherapists by professional organizations, NGO and GO for outstanding achievements in the areas of overall accomplishment, education, practice and service, publications, research and academic excellence. These awards are like fellowships, honorary fellowships, distinguished service award, national honour, roll of honour, leadership award, practice award, investigator award, research in physiotherapy award, outstanding contribution profession, excellence in academic teaching, outstanding contribution to professional literature, excellence in clinical teaching, scholarship awards, humanitarian service award, leadership in rehabilitation, international service award, social impact award, minorities initiatives award, oration award, lecture award, grant, bursaries, memorial award, memorial lecture, life membership, honorary membership, mentorship, professional contribution award, partnership award, student award, student leadership award, young achievement and significant contribution.

Currently, in our country there are numerous awards mostly given by nongovernmental organizations and professional bodies almost every year but whether they are national or state level or regional, criteria, eligibility, call for nomination, number of nominations, how many people applied for the said award, jury or committee, how they decided, could they etc., remain more or less unclear and hence we decided to find out the perception of our physiotherapy professional colleagues about the same through this survey research.⁴

METHODS

Qualitative study design in form of online mixed questionnaire survey was used for this research purpose. The study was conducted in three phase such as identification of key participants, collection of online survey data and data analysis. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from institutional ethical committee of Nootan College of Physiotherapy, Visnagar, Gujarat, India.

Identification of key participants

A list of potential participant physiotherapists was generated by the researchers. This included fresh physiotherapists, physiotherapists who occupied junior level, senior level as physiotherapists, faculty members, post graduate students and physiotherapists with Indian educational background working abroad. A total of 103

individuals were invited to participate in this survey through email and social media contacts like WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook. The inclusion criteria for this study were willingness to participate in the study and ability to understand and reply this survey in English language.

Collection of online survey

For digital and speedy collection of the information, questionnaire was prepared (with the help of www.surveymonkey.com). This was a mixed questionnaire with three closed and four open ended questions (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was sent to participants through email, Telegram, Whatsapp link, and shared on Facebook page repeatedly so as to get better response rate. After one week from 01 April 2019 to 07 April 2019, the data collection was closed and the data received was analyzed.

Data analysis

The data analysis was done with analyze option in www.surveymonkey.com.⁵

RESULTS

An invitation to participate in this research was sent to 150 participants and four email invitations bounced back due to technical reasons. A total of 103 participants completed the questionnaire yielding a response rate of 70.54% after excluding the number of bounced back email invitations. This included 34 completed responses through face book messenger invitation, 27 through WhatsApp message, 16 through telegram messenger app and 26 through email invitations. The demographic details of the participants showed that 78.64 % (81/103) of the participants were female physiotherapists (Figure 1). A total of 8 reported that their highest qualification was PhD, 61 reported MPT as highest qualification and 34 reported BPT as their highest qualification (Figure 2). Their work experience varied from six months to 25 years.

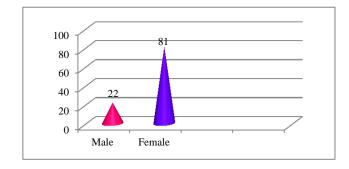


Figure 1: Gender wise distribution of participants.

Only 12 out of 103 reported that they were aware about some government awards for physiotherapists but they did not mention the names of awards or award giving authorities for the same. Remaining 89 reported that they are not aware about any state or national government awards for physiotherapists. Further, most of them reported that lack of political will, absence of central regulatory authority were the reasons for the absence of awards for the recognition of contribution of physiotherapists in health care and the society.

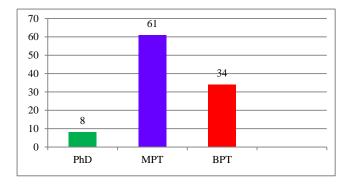


Figure 2: Educational background of participants.

Out of 103 participants 56 responded that they were not happy with non-government awards and 47 were happy with the non-government awards.

Out of these 56 participants who were not happy with nongovernmental awards for physiotherapists felt that they were unhappy because of fake awards, recommendation, references, wastage, do not work, relations, baseless, neglected, leadership failure, guidance, rights, bias, effort and reward imbalance, regulatory body, credit, transparency, justice, awareness, patient doesn't die, life-saving, political will, money, discrimination etc.

Those 47 participants who were happy felt that at least these awards were sort of encouragement and motivations for physiotherapy professionals.

DISCUSSION

Objective of this survey was to get an insight into the perception of words by physiotherapists in India so that information obtained through this research may be beneficial for physiotherapists with policy decision making authorities to take up appropriate course of action so as to get more recognition for present awards, improve transparency in the process if required and initiate additional awards for research and education in order to improve quality of physiotherapy education and services in the country.

Demographic details of the participants showed that majority of physiotherapists were having masters as their highest qualification as compared to PhD and hence the educational and professional leadership need to encourage and explore about more opportunities for physiotherapists to pursue doctoral studies and we believe that this could be one of the honest and sincere attempt to tackle the issue of prefix Dr although we know that this is little bit out the scope of this research.

Government awards

We value national and government awards and believe that they are chosen carefully, transparently and wisely.⁶ One participant stated, "In India, people trust in Government awards rather than private authority awards". Majority of the participants were not aware about the government awards for physiotherapists and believed that it is because of awareness issue, leadership issue and political will and it looks like currently government has no plans for initialling awards for physiotherapists although it's one of the important part of health care and now a days almost every political leader has at least experienced what is physiotherapy for their health issues but when it comes to giving recognition in form of regulatory body or council or award it gets strategically manipulated by other professional and officials. So, one of the ways is to have political representation from physiotherapy fraternity to enhance the possibility of some awards for physiotherapy services, education and research in near future. Physiotherapy is not considered a life-saving treatment, people don't die while receiving physiotherapy and physiotherapy treatments are not very costly hence no awards. Into the words of one of the participant, "Physiotherapy itself is very neglected profession, there lack of recognition of physiotherapy as an independent profession by common public as well as politicians" and in to the word of another participant, "Government is busy with Medical Council of India and AYUSH, it has not yet given regulatory council for physiotherapy so thinking of awards is farfetched".

Nongovernmental awards

A simple search for awards in India for physiotherapists in Google gives about 2,14,000 results (0.40 seconds). Although, we did not focus on the names, number institutions or organizations giving these kinds of awards, their frequency, process etc., but we realized from the responses that awards for physiotherapists by nongovernmental authorities are in practice. In absence of the Government awards they are welcomed by most of the physiotherapists. One of the participant said "they are like booster dose to do our job" and other one wrote "at least they recognize the hard work and potentials of physiotherapists in this country".

Award and reward

History tells us that bad awards glorify corrupt people and institutions while those who really derive accolades are belittled. Some of the participants felt that reward for doing some work like getting more students for conference and so that fetches you an award. It looks like reward is converted into award since reward can be financial and not public, giving some award has less financial commitment but more of public appreciation. (6) One of the participant wrote, "I know that most of time it's just a return favor for something, like making students compulsory to attend the conference etc." In the

words of one participants, I am not happy with the nongovernmental awards because it's not open competition, it's given to same circle of people... and being in the field we fail to understand that what kind of outstanding work has been done by the person who received award."

Award sellers

Here the intention of the award giving organization or person is to make money. One fine day you get a letter stating dear so and so, we are a NGO and pleased to inform you that you have been nominated for prestigious and the term includes All India, National, Bhartiya, Global, International etc., and the list of past recipient is a big and the letter gives you instruction to fill the form and send your curriculum vitae along with amount of Rs 5000 or more. Fake Awards not only exists, they make up one of the prominent rackets in the country. Getting awarded appears like a constitutional right in today's times if only the Right to Award existed. So basically everyone is getting an award, and even the ones who are giving away those awards also have some awards ceremonies for themselves!

Glorify excellence

Most of us believe that getting an award glorifies you, your name, achievement and professional recognition, it help in promotion, pay hike, institutional accreditation and so on. But not having an award keeps you away from these things so getting award has become a race. "We are still happy with whatever awards we get and whichever we get them, since they help in recognition, promotion, social image, increment and accreditation" written by one of the participant who did not disclose his identity to researchers.

Limitations

Although we are of cost effectiveness of online surveys yet they may not reach those respondents that can only respond using alternate modes and we acknowledge one of the disadvantage of conducting such research is people may change their opinion with time.

Recommendations

Further, we would like to recommend that similar research may be done with large sample size involving the policy makers of the profession including governmental and non governmental authorities as well as physiotherapy students so as to get more awareness about the award issues so that present perception about Physiotherapy award moves in positive direction and will encourage the individuals concerned to start additional awards for research and higher studies since we believe that the development depends on individuals, institutions, innovations and amount of GDP spend on education and healthcare services including physiotherapy and rehabilitation decides the fate of the country.⁷

Implications of the study

Findings of the study clearly indicate that there hardly any government award given to physiotherapists as an appreciation to their contribution to the health care and society in India and this is mostly due to absence of political will. Further, there is need for awards with some money that will help physiotherapists to pursue their higher studies and research in order to enhance the professional standards. Physiotherapists should educate themselves and professional colleagues about fake awards and award sellers and learn to find out authenticity, credibility and transparency in the process. We also believe that our research may motivate the physiotherapy representatives in different state councils to come up with some sorts of awards, rewards and recognition for physiotherapists in the field of practice, education and research.

CONCLUSION

There is need for some sort of awards and recognition of physiotherapists' contribution to health care and the society by government and the process of selection for some nongovernmental awards need to be more transparent and unbiased.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the

Institutional Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX I

| Pei | rception of Indian physiotherapists about awards: a survey. |
|-----|---|
| 1. | What is your name? |
| | |
| | |
| 2. | Highest qualification. |
| | BPT MPT PhD |
| 3. | Professional experience in years. |
| | |
| 4. | Are you aware of any government awards for Physiotherapists in India? |
| | Yes No |
| 5. | If no, why you think Government has not initiated any awards for physiotherapists? |
| | |
| 6. | Are you happy with awards given by some non-governmental authorities to physiotherapists? |
| | Yes No |
| 7. | If yes, can you explain why you are happy with awards given by some non-governmental authorities to physiotherapists? |
| | |
| 8. | If not, why you think you are not happy with awards given by some non-governmental authorities to physiotherapists? |
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